



Project Takes a Global Look at Water Quality

Students collect and test water samples in support of World Water Monitoring Day

Finally! A test that students not only want to take – they want to share their results with the rest of the planet!

In support of "World Water Monitoring Day" this year, the South Florida Water Management District actively engaged a number of local students and teachers in this worldwide activity by providing sampling kits and in-the-field instructions.



Above: District scientists explain the different types of equipment and technology used to collect water quality samples.

Right: A student examines a test strip from the sampling kit.



By taking part in this international event, the District hopes to call attention to how local actions can have a global impact on water supplies for people and the environment. "By involving South Florida students in this event, we increase their awareness of how the need for a supply of clean, usable water truly is a worldwide issue," said Naomi Duerr, director of the District's Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Department.

AREA SCHOOLS PARTICIPATE

District staff visited Boynton Beach Community High School and provided a science class with an educational presentation on how the District collects water samples. Each student received a water sampling kit and learned the proper way to test the water quality in the location of their choice. Once the students completed the task, the findings were entered into an internet database.

Staff from the District's Okeechobee Service Center provided a similar educational experience for Okeechobee County middle and high school students.

They, too, received presentations and instructions, along with water quality sampling kits. Their results also went into the worldwide database.

December 5 was the final day for all participants around the world to enter data. When completed, the compiled information will provide a snapshot of the planet's water quality.

"World Water Monitoring Day" is sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, America's Clean Water Foundation, and the International Water Association. More information on World Water Monitoring Day can be found on the internet at (www.worldwatermonitoringday.org).

TUNE IN!

Everglades Radio Network hits the air

Starting in January, when you travel along the western end of "Alligator Alley" across the Everglades you will be treated to an entertaining and educational broadcast about this unique ecosystem by simply turning on your radio (look for the signs). Tuning in to WFLP-LP or WFLU-LP (FM 98.7 or 107.9) will connect you to the Everglades Radio Network – a low-power FM station that will broadcast 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week from the WGCU studio located at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers.

Want to find out more about the Everglades without leaving home or while you're traveling with your wireless laptop or cell phone? The Everglades Radio Network can also be accessed over the internet at (www.evergladesradionetwork.com).

Governor Jeb Bush and Department of Environmental Protection Secretary David Struhs will introduce the three-hour block of programming and talk about the state's commitment to the Everglades and its restoration.

"The Everglades Radio Network will introduce millions of Florida residents and visitors to the Everglades and encourage them to visit the many natural places along the 'Everglades Trail' auto tour," said Struhs. "It is also hoped that the radio broadcast will inform residents and visitors of the ecological importance of the Everglades to Florida, the nation, and the world."

Radio segments will provide motorists with information about the ecosystem, particularly the area along "Alligator Alley," and will be woven together in a magazine-style format. Features will highlight plant and animal life, natural and man-made forces affecting the Everglades, interesting places to stop and visit, precedent-setting restoration initiatives and the people

who have played an important role in shaping the history and future of the Everglades.

Public service announcements, weather updates, a calendar of Everglades-related events, highway advisory information and "Amber Alert" notifications will also be included. Programming will be updated quarterly and segments will be rotated daily to ensure that regular travelers can hear all of the segments. The radio broadcast will be available to approximately 6.5 million vehicles that annually travel across "Alligator Alley" and to countless listeners on the internet.

The Department of Environmental Protection, in cooperation with the Florida Department of Transportation, Florida Gulf Coast University, Division of Emergency Management, and U.S. Senator Bob Graham's office, coordinated the public outreach concept from idea to reality. Input was solicited from both the public and private sectors to develop the initial three-hour programming block that will be broadcast around-the-clock.

The South Florida Water Management District, Everglades National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, Collier-Seminole State Park, Rookery Bay, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge and the Seminole Tribe of Florida also contributed to the programming effort.



Make a PACT

How to reduce permit processing time

Better permit applications result in faster processing times. That's the philosophy driving the creation of the Orlando Service Center's "Permit Applicant Certification Training" program, or PACT. The goal is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Environmental Resource and Water Use permitting processes for both the regulated community and the District.

"With PACT, we expect to get the same protections for the

environment but with far fewer bumps along the way," said Harkley Thornton, the SFWMD Governing Board member representing Central Florida. PACT has three objectives:

- 1) Significantly improve the quality of Environmental Resource and Water Use permit applications being submitted to the District;
- 2) Establish a community of practice among program graduates and District staff to foster continuing improvements in regulatory processes; and
- 3) Recognize the effort by documenting program results, awarding continuing education credits to participants and publicizing the benefits of program participation.

The idea for PACT came from Tom Genovese, director of the Orlando Service Center, based on his years of experience as a permit applicant prior to joining the staff of SFWMD. "I learned early on that you could get your permit more quickly if you know exactly what the reviewer needs to process your application and how to work with District staff both before and during

the review process," he said.

When fully implemented, PACT will have five training modules: Foundations for Success – The Environmental Resource Permit, Water Use Permitting, Wetland Mitigation and Sovereign Submerged Lands, Legal Issues, and Post-Permit Compliance.

PACT is being developed by the Orlando Service Center's regulatory staff.

The response of the regulated community has been enthusiastic. After participating in the pilot of the first module, Don McIntosh, president of Donald W. McIntosh Associates Inc. of Winter Park wrote: "We're now clear on the target, challenged to pass it along to all our staff and committed to implementing that which you took so much time and effort to share. Great job."

Completion of the remaining PACT modules and full program rollout is planned for 2004. "Thanks to the extraordinary effort put forth by the Orlando Service Center team, I am confident of both the success and long-term benefit of this program," Genovese said.

